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**NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL PASSES LEGISLATION TO PROVIDE
SUPPLEMENTAL FUNDS FOR JUDICIAL BRANCH, CHIEF JUSTICE DELIVERS
QUARTERLY MESSAGE**

The Judicial Branch thanks the Navajo Nation Council and Speaker Seth Damon for the passage of Legislation 0190-21 during the Council's Fall Session on Tuesday, October 19, 2021. The legislation includes a supplemental appropriation of \$961,438 for the unmet needs of Judicial Branch districts and programs. The legislation goes to the President of the Navajo Nation for his action upon certification.

Also during the Fall Session, Chief Justice JoAnn B. Jayne delivered her quarterly message to the Navajo Nation Council on Monday, October 18, 2021.

Chief Justice Jayne highlighted the accomplishments and the challenges of the judicial courts and programs during the past quarter, which covers the time period from July 1, 2021 to September 30, 2021.

Chief Justice praised and thanked the employees of the Judicial Branch for their work during the COVID-19 pandemic. "Staff, you made sacrifice in the shadow of this pandemic and it's been almost two years and you are thanked for that. We have had a wonderful year even though all of the challenges are there," she said. She also thanked the branches and agencies for their support for the branch and the public for their patience during the public health emergency.

Chief Justice explained that the branch utilized the Diné thought process through its work in the past quarter including nitsáhákees in expenditure of funds, nahat'á in planning for funds, iiná for purpose and siihasin to review policies and plans to have hope for the future.

In the fourth quarter of the fiscal year, the Navajo Nation comprehensive budget was developed and approved. Unfortunately, funding for the Judicial Branch for Fiscal Year 2022 fell short this year, she said. Because of this, there is legislation before the Council this session for supplemental funds for the Judicial Branch through Legislation No. 0190-21.

Chief Justice Jayne further reported that judicial staff are preparing a proposal for American Rescue Plan Act for recovery expenses due to COVID-19. This proposal will be presented soon and follow the processes that have been put in place, she said.

The judicial courts and programs have been open for essential services only through a Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) with strict protocols in place to keep staff and the public safe. The Branch is in need of recovery services for the people as part of the COOP for gradual and phased re-entry. The funds that are being requested both through the supplemental funding and the ARPA funds will assist with that recovery.

The effect the pandemic has had on the judicial courts and programs has been significant. The fluctuating of cases has been based on a variety of factors, Chief Justice Jayne explained. Limitations of the number of employees authorized to be in buildings, mitigating COVID through essential cleanings when exposures occur, and the need for additional support from sister district courts have affected the courts and programs providing these essential services. In addition, some employees retired recently and there are vacant positions that are difficult to fill such as judges and staff attorneys.

These factors all affect the caseload, Chief Justice said. “Even during this pandemic, the Judicial Branch can and have found ways and partners to continue addressing the projects which ultimately addresses caseload,” she added.

Some accomplishments of the judicial programs and courts during the FY 2021 Fourth Quarter include:

- Probation Services began developing curriculum on its role and responsibilities in the criminal justice system for training Navajo Police Academy cadets and Navajo police officers.
- Peacemaking Program provided services for court-ordered Life Value Engagement sessions and training for local peacemakers through virtual video- and teleconferences.
- Judicial Hearing Officers are providing exemplary services in addressing domestic violence cases at the district courts.
- Dilkon, Crownpoint and Ramah Judicial Districts have resumed resource meetings virtually with local service providers.
- To’Hajiilee Court is working with Canoncito Band of Navajo Health Center to develop training to teach health professionals to assist domestic violence victims with pro se filings of petitions for protection orders.
- Tuba City District Court has taken the lead in providing virtual pro se classes to the public for individuals who wish to represent themselves in court.

Despite the accomplishments, there are still challenges experienced by the branch especially with technology issues including computer hardware and bandwidth. The branch began to address this by purchasing new equipment to improve remote access to the case management system and access to technology for remote court hearings.

The Fiscal Year 2021 Fourth Quarterly Report of the Judicial Branch of the Navajo Nation is available on the www.courts.navajo-nsn.gov website.

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